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AUTHOR Gagne, Robert M.
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ABSTRACT

This paper reexamines the primary goals of education as they were stated by educators many years ago as the seven "Cardinal Principals" of public education: (1) Instruction in health, the inculcation of good health habits, and the provision of physical education; (2) the acquisition of the basic skills--reading, writing, oral expression, and arithmetic computation; (3) worthy home-membership, participating in family pursuits and responsibilities; (4) vocational guidance, acquiring job skills and knowledge of the world of work; (5) education for good citizenship and the study of history, geography, government, and economics; (6) worthy use of leisure time. In looking at these educational principles, the author feels that in today's society the same goals should be upheld. However, the definition or interpretation given to these categories and the relative priorities assigned to them may well be different. Educational goals need to be reexamined when there are changes in society and society's values, changes in the nature of the school population, and changes in educational theory. (JD)

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# Discovering Educational Goals - A Research Problem

Robert M. Gagné

Florida State University

Most educational research, if not all, is conducted within a mold of implicit assumptions about educational goals. For example, when researchers study the effects of teacher characteristics on student performance, the aim of the study is considered worthwhile because the particular student performance is assumed to be a worthy educational goal. When we assess the effectiveness of inserted questions in a text on American history, the study is considered of importance because the goal of teaching American history is viewed as an educational goal of some importance. When the National Assessment of Educational Progress tests the writing skills of thousands of school students, the assumption is that ability to write is a worthwhile educational goal.

While accepting goals as assumptions, we as researchers have not in recent years devoted much attention to the question of how we know these assumptions are correct. Do the goals that we are inclined to assume reflect the sentiments of the people in the communities, states, and nation who are served by education? Do they reflect what are called the "needs" of such communities? Are the goals that we assume in line with recent changes in our society, its technological advances and its prevailing attitudes? Are they up-to-date?

If we tend not to be able to give confidently affirmative answers to these questions, we are then faced with still another set of queries. How do we find out what the goals of education are?

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To what influences in society should such goals be subject - economic ones, political ones, demographic ones? How much hard empirical evidence, as opposed to opinion, can be injected into the determination of educational goals? How much idealism, and how much rational analysis? Whom can one ask about educational goals - a random sample of people, a representative group, an ethnically balanced group, a group of experts, a group of "intelligent laymen"?

I am fully aware, of course, that there are educational researchers within our Association who do worry about educational goals, and who conduct scholarly inquiries that have very definite bearings upon these questions. I would suggest, first of all, that the number of such people is proportionally not very great, when compared to the number of us who are accustomed simply to assume educational goals. And I would suggest further that although it is usual enough to read of discussions of the worth of various educational goals, attention to the derivation of educational goals, and to the validation of goals thus derived, has not been lavishly accorded in recent years.

Deriving Educational Goals

My suggestion is that the derivation and validation of educational goals is a matter of great importance at this juncture in American history. As a consequence, it seems to me that there is need for priority attention to the means and methodology for deriving such goals, as a matter deserving of the efforts of educational researchers.

One of the documents to which we frequently refer, when speaking of educational goals, is Bulletin No. 35 issued by the Bureau of Education (1918), entitled "Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education". It is noteworthy that the Commission which produced that report perceived a need for reorganization of the secondary school curriculum arising from a number of changes that had not yet been reflected in educational practices. They pointed out, for example, that there had been, over the few decades preceding 1918, three important kinds of change:

(1) changes in society: in patterns of living and working;

(2) changes in the population of students attending secondary school; and

(3) changes in educational theory, particularly as this pertained to individual differences and to the application of knowledge.

Surely these reasons for reexamining educational goals are as pressing today as they were sixty years ago, if not more so. In the intervening time, it is true, there have been changes in schools - in their architecture, in their staffing patterns, in their curricula. Yet these changes have only infrequently, if at all, been related to the goals of formal education through the secondary level. And surely also, we as educational researchers would be as highly aware as anyone of the enormous changes over this span of years in society, its life styles and values; in the population of the schools, particularly the secondary schools; and in the various theories which relate to the practices of education.

If an examination and definition of goals is an important issue for us as educational researchers, we need to give attention to two aspects of the question. First, we need to define the problem more precisely - what do we mean by educational goals, and what is the scope of the problem - what must be included and excluded? And second what would appear to be an even more challenging task - how does one go about defining and determing educational goals? What methodology can be employed to tackle the problem?

Scope of the Problem

While I cannot do justice here to the definition of the problem and its scope, I should like to try to take an initial look at it. I shall do this simply by bringing to bear my admittedly inadequate knowledge in reexamining the "Cardinal Principles" described with such wisdom sixty years ago. Were we to apply an equivalent amount of wisdom today, would we see additional need for change in these same goals?

Health. The first goal mentioned by the commission was that of health. Instruction in health, the inculcation of good health habits, the provision of physical education, were all seen as part of this goal.

In the light of current trends in our society, is health still a reasonable goal for education? Most people would probably agree that it is. Some would say, perhaps, that we still fall short of achieving goals of health, particularly in those attitudes toward good nutrition which appear to be so essential to the maintenance of health. Nowadays we have health instruction giving specific em-

phasis to the dangers of drug addiction, alcoholism, cigarette smoking. In view of the mounting costs of health services, there is possibly a broader need for health education oriented toward the prevention of illnesses.

Command of fundamental processes. The second goal mentioned by the commission was the requirement for what we now call the basic skills - reading, writing, oral expression, and arithmetic computation. Evidently, we are still highly concerned with this goal today, in the face of declining scores on college entrance tests, and declining standards of literacy in oral and printed communications. An educational goal of this sort can apparently not be achieved by incidental learning. Instead, it requires a new dedication from each generation of parents and teachers.

The modern context for this goal of basic skills, particularly language skills, includes the special problem of pre-school influences associated with non-standard dialects and foreign languages. The existence of these ethnic differences is surely part of the problem, but should probably not be seen as part of the solution. The latter is still the use of American English in reading, writing, and speaking.

Worthy home-membership. Worthy home-membership is the commissions third educational goal. While its expression may seem quaint, the goal of participating in family pursuits and responsibilities is actually as important today as it ever was.

It would appear that changes in society may make it desirable to re-appraise the character of this goal, and to give it new definition. The nature of families has undergone some change in sixty years.

They are smaller and less permanent, typically. There appear to be more varieties of sexual partnership. But even beyond these changes, we seem badly to need instruction in such areas as parenting and child rearing.

Vocation. The commission described the goal of preparing for a vocation, by a combination of vocational guidance, acquiring job skills, and knowledge of the world of work. Considerable emphasis has been given to this goal in recent times under the rubric of "career education". Obviously, then, we still think of this as an important goal. Here is an area in which, perhaps, new knowledge can be brought to bear in defining the vocational goal. I have the idea that we should be able, today, to do a much better job in informing the student about seeking and holding a job, and probably also in providing him with a more satisfactory kind of vocational guidance.

Civic education. Education for citizenship was one of the cardinal principles. The commission emphasized the teaching of history, geography, government, and economics in ways that related directly to peoples' lives. There appears to be some evidence in recent studies that secondary school graduates are not highly active in civic affairs. Perhaps we could define this goal somewhat better today. Or perhaps the recommendations of the commission have actually not been well heeded in school curricula.

Worthy use of leisure. Well, surely, this is a goal deserving of re-emphasis today, when the time for non-work activities has increased considerably over a sixty-year period. How can the schools

contribute to the use of leisure, and more particularly to the worthy use of leisure? It would be quite a valuable study, presumably, to re-examine educational goals in this area in the attempt to see to what extent the quality of life can be enhanced by leisure activities, and how the knowledge and skills appropriate to such a goal can be contributed to by a formal educational program.

Ethical character. Surely in this area of moral education, too, there is now a resurgence of interest in the possibilities provided by education. Perhaps even more strongly than in 1918, a modern view is held that direct instruction in morality, beginning in the elementary grades, might have some ultimate effect on the reduction of socially undesirable and criminal behavior. This is, of course, only one view. Its presence suggests, however, that we may be approaching the time to make a thoroughgoing appraisal of the need for moral instruction as an educational goal.

It appears to me, in summarizing this brief look at the "Cardinal Principles", that they capture pretty well what are still the major areas of concern for educational programs. My guess is that were we to take a new look, today, at goals for American education, we should not find a very different set of categories. What might well be different, however, are two things: first, the definition or interpretation given to these categories, and second, the relative priorities assigned to them. Such differences would be likely to arise because of changes in our society and its values, and also because of changes in systematic knowledge and technology.

Procedures

Assuming that educational goals were seen as an issue of current importance, how should we as educational researchers advise upon the method or methods for arriving at such goals?

Several different methods have been used in the past.

1. Rational philosophy. One method has been to derive such goals from more general principles by a rational process, which I shall call rational philosophy. For example, more general principles of societal organization sometimes form the basis for the derivation of educational goals. John Dewey's (1915) writings, and those of his followers, are perhaps the outstanding example of this method. Other goals of philosophic origin are to be found in works covering a spread of years from Plato to Rousseau to Whitehead (1949).

2. Committee consensus. Goals are sometimes derived by consensus of a relatively small committee of people chosen for their breadth of knowledge and wisdom, and appointed by a professional organization or governmental authority. The authoritative sponsorship, the careful selection of committee members, and the smallness of committee size, are all factors which appear to contribute to the success of this method.

3. Collection of preferences of representative groups. When committees become large, and when the members are appointed because of their representativeness of groups in the community, a different kind of "goals report" usually results. The method may be modified to include the collection of large samples of opinion by questionnaires, or by methods of group consensus such as the Delphi technique. Examples of educational goal studies using this method, or a variant of it, are those by French (1957) and Kearney (1953). Many states, too,

have gone about the determination of educational goals using this procedure of representative group preferences. So far as I can see, this method seldom yields definitions of goals which are very useful. Typically, they are so comprehensive as to defeat the purposes of summarization and determination of priorities.

4. Empirical-analytic method. In marked contrast to the methods of goal formulation mentioned so far is a method which begins with empirical data concerning adult human activities and by means of a psychological analysis derives the learnable skills, knowledges, attitudes, and other capabilities required to perform these activities. In other words, this method attempts first to determine what people do and what they value doing - what activities make up their occupational lives, their civic lives, and their leisure-time lives. From such an empirical base, analysis is made to reveal the kinds of learnable skills and other dispositions employed in these activities. These are then organized into logically coherent bodies of instruction which become the elements of a curriculum.

This method has been known for a good many years. It was described and used by Bobbitt (1918) and by Charters (1923) in the twenties. An examination of their work may convey the impression of an undue emphasis on vocational skills. But it is likely that these men were using occupational areas only as convenient examples of the method. The logic they employed can be applied equally well to other areas of human activity, and is not necessarily confined to jobs or occupations.

It seems to me there is much to be said in favor of the method which I call empirical-analytic. Modern refinements to Bobbitts' and Charters' approach can readily be made, and are already evident in the procedures we now call "task analysis". The method has a solid base in empirical data, and so is free of the initial biases which affect opinions. It is conservative in what it includes, since non-essentials are quickly weeded out by the application of logic. It thus avoids the tendency of over-accumulation of things to be learned. It is, or should be, psychologically sound, in the sense that learnable entities are carefully defined and not confused with those that are either not learnable or not necessary to be taught.

At any rate, the four methods I have mentioned appear to be the ones that have been used to determine educational goals. This is not an area, however, that has received a great deal of attention from educational researchers. There may well be other methods in need of invention; or perhaps some new revisions to old procedures would be desirable.

Summarizing Statement

My belief is, then, that the determination of educational goals is an important issue which deserves a high priority of attention from the educational research community. The last historically important effort at goal definition, the report on "Cardinal Principles" is now sixty years old. As that report itself points out, educational goals need to be reexamined when there are changes in society and society's values, changes in the nature of the school population, and changes in educational theory.

Every one of these factors has changed in sixty years. A re-examination of the "Cardinal Principles" convinces me that the commission which made this report was displaying extraordinary wisdom in its choice of major categories of educational goals. They are classes of goals with whose importance Americans find it hard to disagree. At the same time, when considered one by one, it is very apparent that times have changed, and that a serious reconsideration of the meaning of each of the seven principles needs to be undertaken.

The question of how to determine goals is surely of interest to educational researchers. Not many of us, after all, would want to think that we are guilty of seeking to validate educational goals by what is called "appeal to authority". Yet we may be guilty of such a charge in this area, whether the "authority" be a venerated philosopher, or the findings of an opinion poll. Methods of empirically based analysis have been available to us for many years, and have continued to undergo refinement since their introduction to the educational scene. I should like to hope that we can bring our talents and our modern knowledge to bear upon this important problem of educational goals.

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